

No. 6B

ANCIENT

SKILLS

AND

WISDOM

REVIEW

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BOOKS

"MEGALITHS, MYTHS AND MEN" by Peter Lancaster Brown (Blandford Press, £4-75).

"SUN, MOON AND STANDING STONES" by John Edwin Wood (Oxford University Press, £6-95).

"STONE CIRCLES OF THE PEAK" by John Barnatt (Turnstone Books, £4-95).

"CIRCLES AND STANDING STONES" by Evan Hadingham (Abacus, £1-95).

Four books with a common theme -- the intricate astro-archaeological qualities of megalithic monuments.

John Edwin Wood has published in "Nature" and "The Archaeological Journal" and is a gifted amateur, 100% aligned with academics and 100% non-aligned with speculative material. As far as he is concerned, acceptance of Prof. Alexander Thom's sterling work -- and by inference his own -- has been hindered by freethinkers on

a parallel path.

Conventional archaeological books, as the author is at pains to emphasize, have largely ignored astronomical discoveries and those books dealing with this specific subject have left the impression that the land was populated with high I.Q. geniuses forever computing the heavenly bodies. To redress the balance, Wood seeks to put the first farmers of N.W. Europe into perspective. His first chapter, however, deals with the shifts in the debate to establish a prima facie case for astroarchaeology. The third chapter deals with mathematics, but as Wood stresses, it is excavations like those by Dr Euan Mackie giving physical results in support of the astronomical hypothesis which are more likely to sway them than statistical analysis.

He goes on to argue that solar observatories were established as ceremonial and calendrical devices and that by the Early Bronze Age, with its lunar observatories, it is strikingly possible that prehistoric man was pursuing knowledge for its own sake. The book closes with a general review of diffusionism, Mackie's beliefs in the megalithic social order and the obligatory attack on ley hunters. Rather than the "lunatic fringe" being an obstacle to the development of advances in prehistoric research, as Wood claims, surely without the new readership attracted to the subject, largely by our exciting discoveries and the controversies aroused, such books as this would be less likely to find publishers.

Certainly here we have what is ironically being dubbed "the New Archaeology" -- marginally so in reality -- presented at least coherently and in a scholarly fashion. Doubtless the author would be surprised just how many of the "lunatic fringe" will wish to possess a copy. He insults most alternative antiquarians by seemingly suggesting Ivimy's deplorable Egyptian colonist contact argument is on a level with the serious ramifications of Watkins's old straight track.

As less pleasant offering is Peter Lancaster Brown's. Subtitled "An introduction to Astro-Archaeology", this book can hardly now be judged in isolation following

John Michell's "A Little History of Astro-Archaeology". In fact, Brown is highly insulting towards Michell, whose efforts to give credence to this subject are monumental in comparison and it is grossly fatuous for Brown to suggest that Michell's reader "is left wondering if Michell is in deadly earnest or whether he is simply indulging in a glorious send-up of the whole business...." (regarding "The View Over Atlantis"). I must admit to grudgingly enjoying Brown's anecdotal style, being familiar with some of those individuals treated, so found these pen portraits unbalanced though some superficially amusing, which led to a mistrust of both his overview and motives. He obviously never read a copy of "The Ley Hunter", for instance, for he merely reiterates an item of Dr Daniel's "wit" about one issue in an act of unbalanced, idiotic scissors and paste laziness.

Naturally as a popularizer of astronomy this side of the subject is represented with more authority, but he fails completely to capture any real feeling for the prehistoric sites under discussion, though he has made a brave attempt at synthesizing a fairly liberal cross-section of the less radical literature on the subject. But for those who wish to feel the magical quality of megalithic enterprise regarding astroarchaeology then Michell's book (Thames & Hudson, £3-75) is a sustained minor masterpiece full of antiquarian flavour.

He does, however, cover in depth and intelligently such aspects as the historical development, the archaeologists' resistance, but on topics such as leys, pyramidology, metrology, cataclysmology and the extraterrestrial hypothesis he is critical and unjust.

While covering important factors in the argument the author sidesteps a multitude of obvious questions: e.g., why were the bluestones moved from Wales to Stonehenge, why the Aubrey holes, etc., noted but without any personal opinion. Journalism is not enough.

As for Alfred Watkins's "The Old Straight Track", he says Methuen "diplomatically dropped" the book when it went out of print. This is a lie. In fact, a large number were remaindered.

One small consolation is that the individual to come off worst is Dr Glyn Daniel for his intractability and deviousness.

Following in the footsteps of Prof. Thom, a much younger and more speculative (yet equally contentious thinker and equally exacting where mathematics are involved) is John Barnatt, and it is a measure of his amateur scholarship that Sheffield University has offered him the opportunity to carry out further work into astroarchaeology under its aegis. His confirmatory work following the model set by Thom has been done in the compact Peak District, an upland area surrounded by huge conurbations whose denizens could well be encouraged to become interested in the study in combination with tourism and walking.

Indeed, the purpose of Barnatt's book is to act as a guide for anyone wishing to visit the varied prehistoric remains of the Peak District and also stimulate research of this kind in other areas. Following general commentaries upon the district and the approach to the varied and vexed problems of interpreting prehistoric remains, Barnatt provides a series of itineraries, chiefly designed with the motorist in mind, also mentioning stately halls and other places of interest along the routes.

Admittedly the core of the book is complex and as with Thom's work necessarily detailed to substantiate the arguments. Three years were spent on site work on the moors. Working as an amateur and in a more moderate climate of opinion, Barnatt is able to introduce speculative ideas beyond those of establishing prehistoric man's abilities as geometer and astronomer. The priestly aspect is given credence by the macrocosmic findings of non-intervisibility of important triangles and the consequent conclusion that these may be part of a natural phenomenon harmonising landscape with a life force in the earth divined long ago.

Barnatt does not accept that they would know trigonometry, though E.M. Nelson conceived that this was possible in "The Cult of the Circle-Builders". Nevertheless, Barnatt provides an appendix on numerology and suggests that number ratios

were deliberately placed in response to an acceptance of the validity of this symbolic truth.

There is a wealth of data for the specialist, plenty of ideas for those of a speculative nature, and plenty of inspiration to get the general public out and about. It is full of diagrams of the area, individual sites and there are other explanatory figures. In fact, the only omission is a section of photographs, which would have been welcome.

The opportunities at Sheffield University being afforded to Barnatt were, I understand, offered first to Evan Hadingham, who chose to decline them. Another young researcher who, however, does not here extend Thom's work but -- as I did in "Quicksilver Heritage -- paraphrases it for popular consumption (not an easy task), but then shows ambiguous sympathy for what he calls the New Hypoboreans*. There is a quote on the jacket from "New Statesman" (by John Fowles, actually) about it being "excellently mapped and illustrated, a credit to the publisher and a promising debut", and I would only argue with the last word as it is Hadingham's second book. Originally in the form of a coffee table book, it benefits from compact paperback form, though a few photographs lose much contrast. Fowles went on to say he opened the book "dreading another descent into mystic ley-lines, cthonic forces and the rest" (just as his public should dread his re-writing his juvenalia -- and in the case of "The Magus", re-re-writing!). It is, however, chatty though its judgments cautious, using Thom's work as a key, though his history of the speculations about megaliths is fine and the potted folklore adequate. A healthy book, argued succinctly and a pleasant read. Also much cheaper than the original £6-50.

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"SOWERS OF THUNDER"

BY ANTHONY ROBERTS

Rider & Company,

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It seems that at last the boat has come in for Tony Roberts, for this voyager through the oceans of legend and myth, navigator of the inner and outer seas of time, space, and consciousness, and who raised the Jolly Roger as an independent publisher, has now found calmer waters in which to reveal the wares from his wanderings through dusty tomes and the mystical business of tying knots to hold together the strands of folklore.

His journey has also brought back a form of golden fleece in the form of a concept he calls geomythics, where he manifests a case for folklore, legends, myth and topography to illustrate the geomantic jigsaw puzzle and diversity of this conceptual formation. This multi-layered concept works, for like symbolism it acts at several levels simultaneously and allows the mind to grasp various facets in a harmonious realisation. Roberts's thesis becomes a case of the parts adding up to a whole greater than its constituents.

He ably and intuitively interweaves the strands of physical giantism and the metaphysical giantism spread thickly upon the crust of mythology. Actual giants are reported against the larger tapestry of the countryside and the geomythics therein with gigantic hill figures and terrestrial zodiac effigies, works of stone and earth and legends of gaints' landscape engineering. The exoteric and esoteric implications of giantlore are harmonized in an effortless and entertaining fashion.

The historical Child of Hale, a gentle giant, is linked to the mythical realm through the tale that he was supposed to have awakened upon a fairy mound to find he had burst out of his clothes.

The sites of geomantic importance and earth energies are inextricably associated with a civilization whose members -- whether indigenous Neolithic scientists, Atlantean survivors, etc. -- had abilities comparable (if not more advanced in their own way) to our own society's. There is here an argument that extremely large beings once populated the world and that their skeletons have survived physically and their feats -- whether of strength or intellectual ability -- are recorded in our legends, myths, nursery rhymes and sacred histories.

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He mentions "Arcana" (to which he contributed) and "The Ley Hunter"

Roberts's range of ideas shows freshness and originality, and I for one had never considered the sensible and appealing idea that gold and silver treasure hoard legends relate allegorically to sun and moon astronomical implications.

The style in which the book is written is a treat and comes to a climax in the last chapter. The illustrations add to the excellent text (the giant on page 136 looking remarkably like six-foot Tony himself). There are four appendices following the basically British material on the giant legends and sacred engineering motifs; covering actual giants, ice and fire cosmology, South American legends, and a beautifully-constructed "ing Anak" segment. Paul Devereux, skillful editor of "The Ley Hunter" provides a worthy foreword.

This is only the tip of the iceberg of Roberts's projects and should justify a veritable Roberts industry for enlightened publishing houses.

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"ANDROGYNY: TOWARDS A NEW THEORY OF SEXUALITY by June Singer

(Routledge & Kegan Paul, £2-95).

The androgyne IS here -- present in each and every one of us. This work, by a practising Jungian psychoanalyst, is a monumental mythological excursion into the ubiquitous background of androgyny to show how important an aspect of human nature this principle is, and how it has been present throughout the history of human consciousness. This potential in an individual has largely been overlooked, frequently repressed (particularly in the Western world), but June Singer urges that by allowing its manifestation the individual will be more at ease with his or herself and with the world in general.

It is monumental in actual length and also there is enormous breadth of subject matter utilised to give scope to her thesis, and though continually apologizing for the insufficiency of her efforts and cursory nature of the glances at different areas where the androgyne has been sought, this paperback could actually, in my opinion, have gained from judicious editing for it does become repetitive in its comparisons.

Perhaps one of the most peculiar aspects of human life is the way in which the male and female human often regards the other as belonging to a completely different species. The impulse for writing "Androgyny" was to focus upon the way in which men and women were changing in the ways that they viewed one another's sexuality. Hence we have two within one, but also two within each. In many ways it is an area of human experience we either do not realize or prefer to ignore as we misunderstand its impulses and, perhaps, mistake our awakening consciousness of this for dubious sexual feelings of a dark or perverted nature.

She argues convincingly that male dominance is questionable, particularly today, and that it is a fantasy which not everyone has yet accepted. Suffering, she says, is created by violation of the interdependence between the masculine and feminine principles.

Her concept of today's New Androgyny will have a familiar ring to those engaged in New Age philosophies and movements, either as individuals (not individualists) or groups. It is a book about persons seeking personal unity but also in resonance with universal energies. Today's seekers are the latest in a long line of pilgrims seeking the same goal and she fits those on the same wisdom path into a coherent history: Taoists, Tantricists, followers of yoga, Gnostics, Kabbalists, astrologers and alchemists, taking in the works of Plato, Freud and Jung. A cosmic truth, revealed many times in many places, in many ways, androgyny is a state of consciousness and is a subtle body buried in the deep unconscious realm that we all share collectively.

The book is not about physical hermaphroditism, though the glitter rock pop stars' sexual ambiguities receive a mention, but androgyny as a mental concept. This book will doubtless be a great comfort to many who have found gender role doubts disturbing their peace of mind, for others it will be a meaty intellectual potpourri, and for the committed a directory for seeking means of transforming themselves into an incarnation of the title.

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ORIGINE OF THE SEXUAL IMPULSE by COLIN WILSON (Panther, 95p)

As always when Wilson writes on a major topic he brings his considerable intellect and wide-ranging knowledge to bear and on the subject of sex this makes for a stimulating and original read. Being widely read he can draw upon many disciplines and areas of fact and fiction to flesh out his thesis. His argument is that all previous writers (this book was originally published in 1963) had looked in the wrong place for their "norm". That sex is a projection of the evolutionary intentionality but that despite having preferences regarding "normality" it takes little efficient measures for enforcing them.

His investigations take the reader through many major fiction writers' handling of the sexual impulse and also the annals of sexology are consulted. Hardly titillating for the voyeur, however it is his provocative philosophy of sexual deviation which makes for a good read. Sadism, fetishism, sodomy, masturbation, incest and other forms of sexual expression are woven into his analysis. A keen student of existentialist psychology and philosophy, Wilson writes compellingly on the darker areas of sexual activity.

Maybe for this latest version some revision would have been in order to update it, remove some of the repetition and remove such an unfortunate phrase as "at the bottom of homosexuality" and in the sodomy context "atomic piles".

But these minor points aside, it is a vigorous and challenging books.

"THE MYTH OF INVARIANCE"

by ERNEST G McClain

(Shambalah Publications

-- Routledge & Kegan

Paul, £3-50)

The Biblical "Book of Revelation" is a happy hunting ground for the misguided and the unstable, where one's oddest fantasies appear encoded for personal decipherment and consequent communication to all and sundry. A sane exposition of the esoteric

nature of the passages was provided in John Michell's "City of Revelation" and now this book complements that scholarly and intuitive work.

McClain's work is equally difficult to comprehend immediately and fully as not only is mathematical appreciation required to enjoy the full flavour of the concept, but musical understanding, too, is necessary to get value from the thesis. McClain seeks to bring musical order out of mathematical chaos -- hardly an ambition for the fainthearted or a topic to be digested with ease on the bus to work or dipped into during occasional sojourns in the smallest room.

Invariance is here seen as patterns which remain the same in different contexts, and the readership of this magazine is generally interdisciplinary in outlook and so I believe such an approach will prove fruitful to people working in a variety of interests. It is the "Rig Veda" to which McClain focuses his attention and India's oldest sacred book provides, along with "Book of Revelation" mysterious mathematical and geometrical details in which the universe emerges as a victory of gods over demonic forces, where the numerical information is accessible in these campaigns where ultimately neither is eradicated. McClain draws attention on the first page to the fact that "poets seem concerned with the exact number of everything they encounter and alive to location in space", or in other words this can be seen in the metrological values and geomantic siting of sacred spots, and also the Brahman priests' chanting of hymns has its corollary in the Druidic choirs of Albion.

McClain and Erich von Daniken would no doubt find themselves so distant in debate that the exercise would be as fruitless as asking Velikovsky to join the Flat Earth Society. For McClain the chariot of the gods is allegorical and relates by imagery to the music and the power of the musician.

As will be obvious, this is both a revolutionary concept and one which challenges simpler and more lazily-assimilable concepts.

As far as this reviewer is concerned, the idea of the mediaeval troubadours as communicators of truth and also the power of the likes of contemporary musicians such as Bob Dylan as able persons to charge their message with extra power through the medium of music is relevant and universal. Those who share this belief will find this work of interest as the role of music in ancient cultures -- and by personal application our own -- raises questions about its dual purpose of possibly encoding mathematical thinking.

A quick skim in a bookshop may well prove off-putting, but those with perseverance and an open mind should find this book most thought provoking.

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"THE MAN WHO LED COLUMBUS TO AMERICA" by PAUL H. CHAPMAN

(Judson Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 6 dollars. Author's address: 2319 Waterton Court, Dunwoody, Georgia, 30338,

The idea of pre-Columbian trans-atlantic voyaging -- and any such attempt at reconstructing such today -- seems to strike a responsive chord in many people. Maybe it is to do with our great seafaring tradition. Also would it not be preferable to have established an Irish saint (or Welsh monks -- as in a rival thesis) making the first landfall in the New World?

Paul H. Chapman has used his knowledge of navigation and cartography to argue the validity of St Brendan's "Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis", who sailed in the 6th Century to America via the Canaries, North East trade winds, then north and finally home on the Westerlies. He then argues that Columbus was aware of the content of "Navigatio" and based his exploration upon it.

Interestingly, Tim Severin has more recently (Chapman's book is from 1973) written of how he and his crew took a leather boat from Ireland to Newfoundland in the wake of St Brendan.

Two other reviews in "Pendragon" magazine cast serious doubts on Chapman's conclusions. There are so many aspects which are contentious that a wider knowledge of other literature on this topic would have been a great aid in giving a clearer opinion on this book. As it stands, the book certainly makes for an interesting read for those who enjoy the thrills and spills of exploration; its maps and line illustrations are impressive, but the photographs are generally diabolical. Read it yourself, however, to see if it is as logical and convincing as it would seem to be.

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"A DICTIONARY OF COMMON FALLACIES" by PHILIP WARD (Oleander Press, £6-95)

"There is of course no such thing as a poltergeist," writes Mr Ward in a typical sample from his Dictionary; and the "of course" epitomises his attitude to most of the topics he covers. Those insecure souls who prefer their science heavily larded with dogma and served in large helpings will find great comfort in this book, which might be more suitably titled The Conformist's Companion. Drawing on "the best scholarly opinion currently available", which for Mr Ward appears to mean the great debunkers of yesteryear (Ward has found Gardner's Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science to be a veritable leadmine of information), he proceeds to demolish everything from Abiogenesis to the Yeti with a devotion to orthodoxy bordering on the heroic.

"ILLUSTRATED ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF ARCHAEOLOGY" ed.; GLYN DANIEL
(Macmillan, £8-95)

Glyn Daniel's editing of the Illustrated Encyclopaedia is a thoroughly academic and valuable work -- so academic that the illustrations are boringly predictable; but the entries spread from prehistory to the archaeology of aviation. Already praised by the academics, this encyclopaedia is a delight for the amateur, although one short paragraph for Winchester against a page and more for Hetepheres reburial, reflects idiosyncratic priorities.

-- Martin Walker.

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for material for this volume, he does not totally ignore the more common topics of songs from this area. No book on the Black Country would be really complete without some reference to the industries of the 18th-20th Centuries and the Industrial Revolution.

Most of the songs in this invaluable collection come complete with musical score for performance.

This book, by one of the prime forces in the folk-singing revival, is a must for any song collector as are all of Raven's books, all packed with tons of songs and plenty of informative notes on their origin and history, but this one is by far the best to date. --- Graham Whitley.

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"A GUIDE TO ANCIENT SITES IN BRITAIN" by JANET & COLIN BORD (Paladin, £2-50).

Reprints in paperback seem to be arriving closer to hadback dates than ever. As regular readers will recall, the Latimer £5-95 version was reviewed in depth in the last issue of "A.S.W.R."

It is good to see the book available in this edition. The quality of photographs has not been harmed by reduction -- which too often occurs in producing slimmer and more compact volumes. I used the former review to criticize selection of sites and make many other critical judgments. These need not be repeated and I would again prefer to stress the positive points which I have made. The book is aimed squarely at encouraging interest in the subject and this it does adequately. It is a megalithic portfolio where the pictures have to take the strain of creating atmosphere. Certainly the dryness of the text does not achieve anything like the magnificence of the illustrations. For those with little or no knowledge of the range of megalithic monuments there is a section describing the archaeological types of structure and a time chart. For those wishing to locate specific sites the details are straightforward, fully informative and well laid out. This aspect is specially gratifying. Details of measurements and monument types are balanced by references to the legends associated with many of the sites. Map diagrams and grid references are given plus access info. It delivers the goods and that is to provide a satisfying pictorial record of visually exciting and easily accessible sites of ancient man.

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"THE SWORD OF SHANNARA" by TERRY BROOKS (Futura, £1-75)

An anonymous reviewer in "Village Voice", according to the cover, reckons this "will be the biggest cult book since Tolkien". A good read as epic fantasies go it certainly is, but to compare it with Tolkien is insulting -- and probably Brooks would have winced at such a comparison. A neighbour who has a huge collection of Tolkien material and reads his works over and over again, especially at bedtime, to his wife's chagrin, read it right through and wished he had not. I must admit to finding Tolkien heavy going (I didn't actually get very far) and preferred this simpler adventure. Certainly, though, Tolkien would never have admitted "The color was indescribable". Warlocks, elves and all make it a good yarn, spoilt only really by the ambitious claims for its literary merit.

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BOOKLETS

Sassoon and Dale have already published a book explaining the Ark of the Covenant as a manna-producing machine (Dale's "Tumour in the Whale" suggests an elaborate though inevitably childish hoax), but Medina seems in earnest as he argues that the Ark was a nuclear generator whose origin was divine or extraterrestrial.

"GOD'S WEAPON" by David MEDINA (privately pubd., 6 Grant Court, 18 Spencer Hill, London SW19 4NY, £1, inc. p&p)

The first part tells how Moses received instructions for its manufacture and the second its history. I would have liked to have seen Medina make his own Ark as he is so keen on detail and mentions a von Daniken film which alleged such an object had been made -- or was it just like one of Dale's rumours? In fact, tumours reappear in the context of radiation and he uses "The Apocrypha", another term for rumour.....He reads into the falling of quails in a circle around the Israelites as proving radiation and gives "evidence" of electrical discharges and has a pertinent point about ionized air. However, his "No-one can deny that angels are extraterrestrial" is a bold statement I would certainly challenge. The book was written to interest others in these ideas and contact others working on such hypotheses. Although sceptical, I would hardly dare mock what must remain what is patently a mystery.

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"THE MORDIFORD
DRAGON"

The following two booklets are edited by H.C. HARPER, of Torsdag Publications, 56 Filkins Lane, Chester, CH3 5EH. The former is 75p+10p p&p (50p postage airmail); the second 60p, inc., p&p.

After a limited edition of 100

copies -- and now in its second edition -- this work is based upon an 1848 work by J. Dacres Devlin and his unpublished papers upon Herefordshire's major dragon legend. Though not having the evocative appeal of, say, The Lambton Worm, or the geomorphic pathos of The Loathly Worm of Spindleston Heugh, the alleged slaying of the Mordiford Dragon by a condemned man's guile makes for an interesting tale. The basic fascination of this slim but handsomely presented mimeographed work is in the period reproductions and poem extract. Along with its "antiquarian" substance, Clive Harper links the pieces of his choice from Devlin's fascination with the legend by a slight commentary. No attempt is made to put this tale into either context of other British dragon legends or to interpret the motifs in the tale. The length of the work precluded the former and the latter is a fascinating but maze-like minefield. With my and Jan Hoults' books on dragons, 1978 seems to have been a British Year of the Dragon.

"NIXON THE CHESHIRE PROPHET"

This legendary character has few certainties surrounding his life and there are even differing opinions as to his Christian name -- rather than Robert it could have been Richard! But this Nixon seems to have been basically honest, though the subsequent events before his death hardly show him as an esteemable fellow.

"The Original Predictions of Robert Nixon, as delivered by himself in doggerel verse" have similarities with those of Nostradamus, the Brahan Seer, Mother Shipton, and my favourite of when a fox spoke of times to come to a huntsman. These words were written at the time of Edward IV, whose summons he prophesied -- but not the exact nature of his death. The words given here, however, date from the 18th. Century and as with all such material are open to interpretation. I was impressed with the interpretative material as without this the verse appeared nonsensical rather than inspired. The line about "Foreign nations shall invade England with snow on their helmets" is reiterated in 20th. Century rumour and fleeing "Cock of the North" could be about Lord Lambton! Seriously though, actual parallels are given to the main work and other prophecies attributed to Nixon and their possible parallels close the work. It is taken even to the recent I.R.A. bombings. John Michell has championed the utterances of seers and this resurgence of interest in prophecy is capably boosted by this slim but fascinating work.

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"REGION 1" by
MARTIN SPENCE.

Published by the Black Jake Collective, c/o 115 Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 4AG, 35p, inc. p&p.

As a long-time microwave tower spotter and conspiracy/rumour aficionado, any work on the snoopers and "security" services fascinates me: this one in particular for being about my own area. I also supported it for being sponsored by the Tyneside Aubrey, Berry, Campbell Defence Committee, as a fellow journalist and having grave suspicions about certain State activities. This book does nothing to allay such paranoia as one might have nurtured by pondering the frailty of towers (at least with regard to their unlikely resistance to nuclear attack), the

seeming craziness of boundary changes (explainable only in a home defence context), and certain planning permission anomalies (the case of the bunker complex near my home having recently been a case in point, with factory development there refused). As for the writer's thinking on the local sub-regional control centre, I've seen his second choice and been told by a friend of former Spies for Peace person that it contained tons of food and was inspected at regular intervals. It is also interesting to note that a recent Cleveland exercise involving many branches of local government, police and military dealt with the unlikely effects of an earthquake and tidal wave follow-up. This booklet can be regarded as over-reactive and paranoid, but as a journalist I have been personally surprised by the activities of police in Hull and Hartlepool in their filing information on journalists. Road block exercises at Scotch Corner are associated with accessibility of the A1(M) for troop movement "if widespread civil disobedience, or effective revolutionary initiatives, were taking hold in the North East". Whether a power to the people uprising would be wise is not the point here: if such actions arose the State could create a state of emergency to resist it with astounding speed and force. So remember next time you vote for your friendly district councillor, he may sign your death warrant for execution in the not too distant future.

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"HOLY WELLS AND ANCIENT CROSSES" by MICHAEL W. BURGESS (Published by the author at 21 Kirkley Gardens, Lowestoft, Suffolk; 50p inc. p&p)

In the same format and style of Mike's previous booklet on the standing stones of Norfolk and Suffolk, this booklet is a gazeteer in two parts, covering first the holy wells, ponds and streams by alphabetical reference to their locations, giving descriptions, history and folklore of these places, with grid references. The second section is similarly laid out and deals with ancient stone and wooden crosses. There are drawings to illustrate the text plus notes and bibliographies. A worthy publication of interest not only to those living in East Anglia.

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"CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE NORTHERN KIND"
by JENNY RANGLES (Printed by Nufois Press, 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham, NG2 3GB. Cover price 30p)

A small booklet produced specifically to indicate to the general public the facts behind the "CEIIIK" film fiction. The ufological background

is presented simply and adequately gives guidance to the bewildered man in the street. Naturally it will have no appeal to the MUFOB reader unless he or she wished anyone to get a basic grounding before attempting to comprehend the deeper aspects of ufology. In what it sets out to achieve it does with ease. In 16 pages it gives the lowdown on types of UFO encounter, animal disturbance, vehicle interference, entities, authority's reaction, radar effect, and advice on what to do upon seeing and UFO and how to find out more about the subject. Plenty of actual cases are given to illustrate the brief summarized aspects.

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PLAYS

"THE IMMORTALIST" by HEATHCOTE WILLIAMS
(John Calder, £1-50)

It takes a skilled playwright and a clever commentator on life to give one of his characters a comment to make about cancer -- "another fine growth industry" -- without it appearing ill-judged or deliberately offensive. In fact, the basis of "The Immortalist" could be construed as a sustained black comedy. The subject is death, or rather the possibility of overcoming death and achieving everlasting life. The play is a potent elixir, consisting of only two characters, a TV interviewer and his subject, a 278-year-old man whose ability to consistently deflate and at the same time edify his inquisitor is matched by the equally fictional Don Juan and Carlos Castaneda encounters. The play itself can be construed at different levels and may be more than simply a literal argument -- with seemingly valid reasons -- for the possible prolongation of human life, and be an allegory about the role of rumour and conspiracy as part of a living and immortal aspect of folklore.

Time is a grand theme and has many roles to play, from our personal view of it to the way in which capitalism sees it in workers clocking in, receiving clocks when they retire to three-year, five-year, etc., plans.

Those conversant with the underground/hippy/New Wave culture will be rewarded by many relevant references, and Williams makes many telling points, such as that the advent of ecological concern has coincided with widespread Western drug taking. In fact a major influence was a conversation between the author and David Solomon, currently lingering in Bristol Jail for his role in the Operation Julie drug operation (as I write this the appallingly ugly Police Sgt. Julie has been wedded and "The Sun" ludicrously described her as a "pin-up"!).

The dialogue swings pendulum fashion between wisdom and vulgarity. There are great lines such as "Death is always suicide", "DNA is a spiral to screw us", and "Accidents are incidents with an axe to grind", and even comic touches do not lower the inherent seriousness: "Do you ever imagine being shat on by a pterodactyl?"

You will remember for a long time afterwards the crackling ideas and just remember, "Don't let Father Time kick sand in your face."

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MAGAZINES

An extended section on magazines and journals will appear in "ASWR" No. 7,

along with a full feature on the latest productions from Nigel Pennick and the I.G.R. Plus books by Colin Wilson, Aubrey Burl, Cris Popenoe, Nevill Drury, Miles and many others.
